

Candidates for the 2020 Literary Prize:

Guy de Maupassant, by Christopher Lloyd. Reaktion Books. 218pp. £11.99. ISBN 9781789141979.

A critical biography of Guy de Maupassant relating his life to the evolution of his creative achievement and evaluating the legacy of his relatively short but brilliant literary career.

Art is a tyrant: the unconventional life of Rosa Bonheur, by Catherine Hewitt. Icon Books. xi,483pp. £20. ISBN 9781785786211.

A detailed life of the 19th century artist Rosa Bonheur, greatly celebrated and honoured during her lifetime as the greatest animal painter in France but today somewhat neglected by museums and little known to the general public.

The death of the French Atlantic: trade, war and society in the Age of Revolution, by Alan Forrest. Oxford University Press, xxx,320pp. £35. ISBN 9780199568956.

A scholarly but eminently readable examination of how France's rich and profitable Atlantic empire experienced a sudden and irreversible decline during the Age of Revolution, a decline caused by three major causes: a series of wars, especially naval wars with Great Britain; the growth of anti-slavery sentiment in France and elsewhere in Europe; and the French Revolution, which led to a (short-lived) abolition of slavery in the French empire and helped to provoke the establishment of the first black republic in Saint-Domingue (now Haiti), the richest colony in the Caribbean. This caused a diaspora of colonists and economic disaster in the great ports on France's western seaboard; the repercussions of all this still echo in French society and historical memory today.

Au revoir tristesse: lessons in happiness from French literature, by Viv Groskop. Abrams Press. 248pp. £17.99. ISBN 9781419742989.

A light-hearted but serious look at twelve classics of French literature from the 18th to the 20th centuries, analysing the life lessons that can be drawn from them.

Poulenc: a biography, by Roger Nichols. Yale University Press. xiii,372pp. £25. ISBN 9780300226508.

The first full English-language study of the life and work of Francis Poulenc, from the light-hearted gaiety of Les Six in the 1920s through to his more overtly serious, even religious, works of later years.

A schoolmaster's war: Harry Rée, British Agent in the French Resistance; edited by Jonathan Ree. Yale University Press. xxiv,216pp. £14.99. ISBN 9780300245660.

The experiences of an English schoolmaster who served as an SOE agent in France during WW II, as recorded by him in writing and broadcasts and edited and compiled by his son.

Black Spartacus: the epic life of Toussaint Louverture, by Sudhir Hazareesingh. Allen Lane. xxxi,427pp. £25. ISBN 9780241293812.

The biography of Toussaint Louverture from his early days as a slave to his leadership of the black slave revolt in Saint-Domingue (now Haiti), his position as governor, and his betrayal by Napoleon's forces to end his days in a dank prison in the French Jura. The final chapters deal with the history and legend of Toussaint Louverture as an inspiration to black anti-slavery and anti-colonialist ideas and actions.

War in the shadows: resistance, deception and betrayal in occupied France, by Patrick Marnham. Oneworld. xxxv,363pp. £20. ISBN 9781786078094.

An investigation of the very complicated story of the betrayal in 1943 of SOE's PROSPER network at the same time as the betrayal and arrest of Jean Moulin in Lyon and the possibility of links between these events.

France in the Second World War: collaboration, resistance, Holocaust, empire, by Chris Millington. Bloomsbury Academic. xvi,251pp. £22.99 ISBN 9781350094970.

An introduction to the experience of France under the German occupation; unusually, it also includes coverage of parallel developments in the French empire, covering both the colonies under Vichy control and those under the Free French.

1652: the Cardinal, the Prince and the crisis of the Fronde, by David Parrott. Oxford University Press. xxii,307pp. £65. ISBN 9780198797463.

A detailed study of the climactic year of the Fronde, the series of civil wars in France between 1648 and 1653; a complicated history of changing alliances and military fortunes which ended in the triumph of Cardinal Mazarin and set France on the path to absolutist monarchy under Louis XIV, but could, in the judgment of the author, have ended very differently if the chips had fallen differently.

Charles de Gaulle, by Andrew Knapp. Routledge. xvi,456pp. £34.99. ISBN 9781138839199.

A history of the life of General de Gaulle from the beginning of his military career in 1909 to the legacies and myths after his death in 1970.